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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN SUDAN - IDP RETURNS UPDATE

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Summary  
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1. The returns season, which has witnessed a fairly active spontaneous return movement to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas - Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile - has come to an end with the onset of the rainy season and will restart in October or November 2006. According to the Federal Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) reportedly returned to Southern Sudan, and the U.N. Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) reported that 175,000 IDPs returned to the Nuba Mountains. As part of a U.N./non-governmental organization (NGO)-organized returns program, 9,700 IDPs returned to Northern Bahr El Ghazal from Southern Darfur, 4,000 IDPs returned from Western Equatoria to Bor through Juba, and 1,500 IDPs have returned from Nimule to Bor. End summary.

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North to South Returnees in 2006  
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2. According to the Federal Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Kosta Manibe, in his address to the National Assembly in July 2006, during the current returns season reportedly 500,000 IDPs have returned spontaneously to the South against a target of 620,000. Manibe added that the target is for 700,000 people to return during the 2006/2007 season and 500,000 IDPs during the 2007/2008 season. The U.N. has assisted in the return of 9,700 IDPs from South Darfur to Northern Bahr El Ghazal, of which 4,000 IDPs are from Belail IDP camp in Nyala, South Darfur. UNMIS reported that 175,000 IDPs returned spontaneously to the Nuba Mountains. Due to the rainy season and poor roads, the returns program has been halted temporarily. Under a Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) assisted returns program, 2,860 people have returned to Warab State, 3,500 to Northern Bahr El Ghazal, and 6,000 to Unity State.

3. USAID-assisted returns from Nimule to Bor were managed by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and two convoys with 1,500 people have reached Bor. These operations have now stopped due to rains and poor roads and will recommence in the dry season after October. Under this operation, 20,000 IDPs are waiting for assistance to return home. With assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 680 IDPs were moved from Yei to Lologo way station in Juba, and 4,000 IDPs have also been assisted in returning to Bor from Juba as part of a larger group of 12,000.

4. In addition to river transport to Juba and Malakal by barges, returnees have used several ground corridors to the south including traveling through the Nuba Mountains to Unity State, through Abyei and Mairam to Greater Bahr El Ghazal, through Nuba Mountains to Northern Upper Nile, and from Southern Darfur to Northern Bahr El

Ghazal. Manibe criticized the inadequate funding for basic services in the South, low transport provision for returnees, and the poor capacity of the River Transport Corporation (RTC) in managing river transport from Kosti. Manibe added that some IDPs have decided to return to Khartoum after seeing the poor or inadequate state of services in the South.

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Onset of the Rainy Season  
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¶5. Due to the rainy season, roads have become impassable in the South and the Three Areas, preventing vehicles from carrying returnees home, hindering humanitarian agencies from providing assistance, and preventing returnees from constructing new shelters. UNMIS-Return, Re-integration, and Recovery (RRR), has called for all parties involved in returns programs to discourage returns operations until the beginning of the next dry season in October or November of 2006. The U.N. is evaluating activities of the past season and will make policy and operational adjustments, if necessary, based on previous experiences, including protection, tracking and monitoring, way stations, re-integration, coordination, information campaigns, and advocacy. UNMIS-RRR will coordinate more closely with the Sudanese Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee (SRRC) and other departments of the GoSS to strengthen capacity on returns and re-integration.

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Procedures to Facilitate Returns  
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¶6. The GoSS has formed a taskforce to facilitate the registration of those IDPs willing to return voluntarily to the South and has

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allocated USD 24 million to support returns. The GoSS has registered a total of 320,000 IDPs, and of these, 150,000 were prioritized. Priority was given to skilled workers and the most vulnerable populations. The process was slowed due to logistical complications, the beginning of the rainy season, and the debate about hiring versus procuring trucks. The GoSS hopes to resolve the issue of procuring 134 trucks/buses by the beginning of the dry season in October or November. UNMIS, IOM, and other stakeholders are making preparations to launch a second survey in August that will cover all IDP populations countrywide and will focus on IDP intentions to return home or remain in their places of displacement.

¶7. UNMIS organized a workshop in Rumbek in May 2006 and consulted with several stakeholders to revise policy and operational procedures on returns and re-integration to help improve future operations.

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River Corridor - Great Potential  
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¶8. The wharf in Kosti on the White Nile River is a site where IDPs from the North return to the South via barges. The RTC in Kosti, however, lacks the operational capacity to provide for dignified returns. The RTC lacks barges and pushers, and therefore has been unable to organize regular trips to Juba and Malakal. At present, the RTC currently owns only four barges. As a result, this has led to overcrowding at the wharf and returnees have been forced to travel on cargo barges in inhumane conditions with no shelter, water, sanitation, or safety facilities on board. Many lives, especially those of children, have been lost.

¶9. The Government of Germany is working with the RTC to improve engine capacity (pushers), and the project will renovate 16 pushers and build 32 engines. The Government of the Netherlands is funding the construction of 50 new barges in a 5-year project, including, 32 cargo, 8 passenger, 8 flat, and 2 fuel barges. IOM has renovated and leased two passenger barges which are now in use in the Juba-Bor

returns operation.

¶10. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) operates the way station in Kosti wharf with funding from USAID and manages a returns monitoring and tracking system with support from IOM. ADRA's tracking of IDPs returning by trucks/buses to points in the Nuba Mountains and Darfur is not precise as some trucks are not counted. The tracking of the river corridor is more accurate because all returnees embark on the barges at one wharf. The federal and state governments are opening a new wharf in Kosti to solve the over-crowding problem at the old wharf which is located closer to town. The move may cause temporary difficulties if services, such as water and sanitation, are not already in place at the new wharf. (Note: Way stations built by the U.N. in some locations are not used by spontaneous returnees who travel directly to rural home areas without stopping in town centers. Way stations are favorable for assisted returns, where people are transported to town centers where they await onward transport to rural areas. End note.)

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Harassment of IDPs in Khartoum Camps  
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¶11. UNMIS has requested a more practical and systematic approach to dealing with the increasing number of police raids on IDP settlements in Khartoum as part of a campaign to eliminate brewing of alcohol, one of the few livelihoods available to IDP women. Cases of harassment, violence, and sexual abuse associated with such police raids and detentions have been reported by NGOs who operate among the IDPs. The U.N. and NGOs will advocate with the Sudanese government to stop such human rights abuses. According to Manibe, 20 percent of IDPs in the North have chosen to integrate into their current communities, 70 percent of IDPs are willing to return home, and 10 percent have not yet decided what to do.

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USAID Programs Assisting Returnees  
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¶12. To date, USAID implementing partner ADRA has provided assistance to returnees on the Nile, through the Kosti and Malakal way stations, and supported sanitation activities in Bor town, a health clinic in Juba, and food and non-food item (NFI) distributions.

¶13. In the area of assisted returns, USAID partners NPA and CRS have aided in the transport of 20,000 IDPs from camps in Equatoria (Kajo Keji and Magwi Counties) to Bor.

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¶14. USAID is also supporting 15 partners working in the health sector, 2 partners operating water and sanitation programs, 11 partners in the food security sector, and 4 partners engaged in livelihoods programs.

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